The Five Stages of Grieving Pluto The Planet
Posted originally on the Archive of Our Own at https://archiveofourown.org/works/46046296.

Rating:
General Audiences

Archive Warnings:
Creator Chose Not To Use Archive Warnings, Major Character Death

Category:
M/M

Fandom:
Dead Poets Society (1989)

Relationships:
Richard Cameron & Charlie Dalton, Richard Cameron & Neil Perry, Todd Anderson & Richard Cameron, Richard Cameron & Knox Overstreet, Richard Cameron & Gerard Pitts, Richard Cameron & Steven Meeks

Characters:
Richard Cameron, Charlie Dalton, Steven Meeks, Gerard Pitts, Neil Perry (Dead Poets Society), Todd Anderson, Knox Overstreet, John Keating (mentioned), Neil Perry's Parents (Mentioned), Ginny Danbury (mentioned), Chris Noel (mentioned), Chet Danbury (mentioned)

Additional Tags:
Richard Cameron-centric, Richard Cameron Redemption, Sympathetic Richard Cameron, richard cameron needs a hug, Angst, Character Study, Pluto is a planet!, Hurt/Comfort, Emotional Hurt/Comfort, They just need to talk it out, the ending is kind of shitty, but I like it!, Friendship, Grief/Mourning, Five Stages of Grief, I'm Bad At Tagging, Arguing, Anger, I Wrote This Instead of Sleeping, lots of metaphors, Cameron is very poetic for never having read a poem in the cave, Inner Dialogue, Bad Spelling & Grammar, I am a Richard Cameron Apologist

Language:
English

Stats:
Published: 2023-03-27 Words: 1,962 Chapters: 1/1

The Five Stages of Grieving Pluto The Planet

by Wildemercury

Summary

Neil Perry had been the sun, wild and bright-eyed, warm to everyone and anyone who crossed his path. Charlie Dalton was Jupiter—big and boisterous, taking up every crevice that he could. Steven Meeks was Venus, and Gerard Pitts was Earth—the two twin planets that could always see each other due to their proximity. Knox Overstreet was Uranus—moody and sensitive with every passion that consumed him. Todd Anderson was Saturn, unique with every tiny particle of sand or rock in his rings. Richard Cameron was Pluto, the smallest planet, and unbeknownst to him, not even a planet after 2006.

Notes

See the end of the work for notes

Psychologists say that there are five stages of grief: denial, bargaining, depression, acceptance, and anger. Each dying poet felt these five stages after the death of aspiring actor Neil Perry; some of these feelings ruminate stronger than the others in these boys. Todd Anderson was obviously manifesting depression, Steven Meeks was inching towards acceptance, while his counterpart Gerard Pitts was stuck in a pool of denial. Knox Overstreet was willing to trade anything just to hear Neil again in his fits of bargaining. The self-proclaimed best friend of Neil Perry, Charlie Dalton, felt all of these things and more, depending on the hour.

Richard Cameron, on the other hand, personified anger. He was angry at Neil's parents, angry at the school, angry at Keating, angry at the very world itself for ripping away the sunshine that was the Perry boy. Currently, he was angry at the five boys wearing matching blazers who were staring down in betrayal at him. To think he worked so hard to make these boys his friends, he wiped the blood off his upper lip, looking at the crimson liquid with a sneer. "You just signed your expulsion papers, Nuwanda," he said, standing up shakily. "And if the rest of you are smart, you'll do exactly what I did. They know everything anyway. You can't save Keating, but you can save yourselves." He said this, pointedly ignoring the lump in his throat, the sinking feeling in his stomach, and the blood streaming down his face. He didn't let one more word be said as he walked out the door and into the hall; even if someone had said something, he doubted he would have cared much.

He pinches the bridge of his nose as he walks back to his god-forsaken room or maybe the bathroom. He belatedly realizes he should probably go to the infirmary, but it's too late, and he's already walking in the direction of his room, plus the nurse doesn't get paid enough to deal with his particular symptoms of bullshit. He's so lost in his thoughts of the haunting faces of his friends that he barely hears someone call his name; the key word in that sentence is barely, though, so when he does look up to see the confused face of one Dean Nolan, he isn't as surprised as he wished he was. "Dear God, son, what happened to you?" The older man asked. Cameron shrugged. "I fell." The lie easily tumbled off his lips. The older man frowned and said, "Mr. Cameron, I highly doubt you fell, If you're protecting one of your hooligan friends-" Cameron quickly interceded, "I fell! Ok, I tripped

and fell down the stairs, and I fell, that's all." He frustratedly announced, "Mr. Cameron, control yourself; you are acting highly out of character. Definitely not like a top student of this fine school." Cameron balked—could this day get any worse? Obviously, it could. Not only did all of his friends hate him, he had a bloody nose and might be mildly concussed; now he was going to be lectured about not upholding Welton values. He actually wasn't going to allow this to happen; the blood boiling in his veins and the ability to have no more fucks to give were fueling his next little outburst. "Well, sir, I've heard grief can do that to someone, and seeing as my friend just committed suicide, I'd say I was grieving. Now, if you'll excuse me, sir, I have a bloody nose to take care of and a Latin test to take tomorrow. I'm sure you wouldn't want a top student of your fine institution to fail." He quipped before walking past the dean without a word edgewise.

———

Richard Cameron didn't mind the silence of the room that had once been filled with the noise of bongos; in fact, he decided that it helped his studying, or at least that's what he told himself. In reality, he missed Charlie, even though he was only a couple of dorm rooms down. After the fight, he started sleeping on Todd's floor, coming up with the excuse that Todd needed him. In actuality, it seemed that Cameron needed him, needed someone, anyone, to tell him he wasn't going insane. He had thrown himself into his studies, and without the distraction of sleep or a social life, he can say confidently that his latin translation skills have gotten better. It's better this way; even if he doesn't have anyone to sit at meals with anymore, he can now watch them all be glum from afar. I mean, so what if he doesn't go into the dormitory common room anymore; he never cared much for their loud chatter and that goddamn radio playing anyway. Who needs sleep when you can drink bitter coffee and read about Julius Caesar and his twenty-three stab wounds?

To be honest, he hadn't realized his self-inflicted pity party was happening until a week after the initial fight and icing out. Charlie had needed a textbook or a towel or something totally insignificant that could have totally been borrowed by some other poet when he came bounding into the room. His easy smirk slid off his face at the sight of his ex-roommate's shoulders tightly hunched over his desk. "Oh. You're here." He said lamely. Cameron didn't look up from the essay he was writing when he responded, "It is my room." Charlie nodded and turned to look for the item he needed. The silence in the

room was palpable; both boys were too hesitant to break the uncomfortable civility. Well, at least until Charlie asked the question on the tip of his tongue. "Why didn't you rat me out?" Cameron, who sensed the question way before it was asked, quickly responded with utter monotony. "The last time I did that, I got a bloody nose." Charlie rolled his eyes and huffed, "Funny. Seriously, though, why?" Cameron shrugged, setting his pen down, still not looking at the other boy. "Todd, Knox, Steven, and Gerard didn't need to lose another friend. Neil was enough." The pregnant pause that followed that very loaded sentence unnerved the two. "What about you? You didn't say that you didn't need to lose another friend." Charlie quietly asked. Cameron finally turned around, leveling his gaze to match Charlie's: "Oh please, Dalton, we weren't ever friends."

———

Neil Perry had been the sun, wild and bright-eyed, warm to everyone and anyone who crossed his path. Charlie Dalton was Jupiter—big and boisterous, taking up every crevice that he could. Steven Meeks was Venus, and Gerard Pitts was Earth—the two twin planets that could always see each other due to their proximity. Knox Overstreet was Uranus—moody and sensitive with every passion that consumed him. Todd Anderson was Saturn, unique with every tiny particle of sand or rock in his rings. Richard Cameron was Pluto, the smallest planet, and unbeknownst to him, not even a planet after 2006. The poets made up their own galactic universe in the halls of "Hellton." They orbited in perfect sync past each other. Sometimes there were other people in their orbit: Chris Noel, Chet and Ginny Danbury, and Mr. Keating—all shooting stars that shone bright until they inevitably passed by. For the most part, though, Neil had Todd, Meeks had Pitts, Knox had Charlie, and Cameron had himself. It's just as plain as the planets.

These thoughts plague Cameron as he sits on the window box in the dormitory common room, his book on astronomy long forgotten. Meeks looked at him sadly from his stance leaning on the door frame, taking in the other ginger's pale freckled face and deep eyebags. He wished he could just accept Cameron back in with open arms, but when Charlie and Cam fight, it can do more damage than it's worth to fix it. Neil always knew how to fix it. He frowned before making his way to Todd's room.

———-

The solitude of having all of your friends hate you only affected Cameron late at night and in the showers. No one can see tears on your face under the perpetually cold shower head at Welton. So when red-rimmed-eyed Cameron walks into his room, towel slinging around his pajama-covered shoulders, to see the remaining poets, he is the first to say he wishes he hadn't cried in the showers. "What are you doing here?" he asked petulantly. "Meeks was worried. We were all worried about you." Todd said nervously, quickly adding, "I don't know why I said Meeks first; it was just his idea, but we really were all worried." Cameron rolled his eyes, turning to hang his towel on his hook and put his shower caddy away. "This feels scarily like an intervention." He jokingly murmured into his shampoo bottles. "Maybe that's because it is one." Knox retorted before Charlie cut in. "Ok, they're all bouncing around the subject, so I'm going to be frank with you. You said that you didn't want them to lose another friend, yet you have pulled away so much that no one talks to you anymore. You said Neil was enough." Cameron turned on his heel at the undercurrent of anger too familiar with him now: "That's because I was never their friend, but you were, asshole," and I wasn't going to ruin one more thing." Charlie frowned and Pitts smiled sheepishly, "C'mon, Cam, you know that's not true." "You're one of our closest friends; you're a poet!" Cameron laughed mirthlessly, "Mhm, I am a poet, huh? Let me be frank with you all now. I was never a poet, and Charlie didn't even want me to come in the first place. No one would listen to my stories either. Just face it, I was never one of you. I was an outsider looking in, and that's fine. Just keep it that way." He says it emotionlessly. He looks at the boys and sees the 10-year-olds he met when he first began at this school. The young man frowns on the people he has known for the majority of his life. His stomach sinks, and he wants to cry and scream and yell because, goddammit, he has the right to! "I mean, you guys couldn't even tell me that Neil died! I had to hear from Hagerty! No one comforted me! No one ran in the snow with me! No hugs or sympathy! What type of friends do that?" He shouts, "I should have been there; Neil was my friend too! In fact, he was the only real one I ever had, and now he's dead and you all hate me, so nothing even matters any more," he sobs. "It isn't fair." He gets cut off by a pair of arms wrapped around his chest, then another, and another, and another, and another. Five sets of arms, five sets of grief, and five lost planets orbit him for the first time. "We're so sorry, Cam. We should have told you." Todd says. "I don't know why we didn't. That day was just so confusing." Knox adds. "You're our friend, and we love you." Meeks says, and Pitts hums in agreement. "You're a poet, the best damn poet around." Charlie says, "And Todd's right, we're sorry. I'm sorry."

Maybe Neil was the sun. Maybe Pluto isn't a planet. Maybe there are five stages of grief. Maybe he had always been a poet. Maybe he isn't alone. Maybe he should get angry more. Maybe none of this will matter in a couple of years. Maybe he'll forget about poems and caves. Maybe he never will. Maybe he missed his friends, and maybe they missed him too. Maybe it will all be alright. Maybe Pluto won't ever have to be alone again.

End Notes

Thanks for reading my angsty playlist filled ramblings!

Please drop by the Archive and comment to let the creator know if you enjoyed their work!